

Testimony of Abdur Rahim Wali III
Student at Gateway Community College
Appropriations Committee

February 15, 2017

Members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Abdur Rahim Wali III, I am a student at Gateway Community College. I am 30 years of age and in my third year completing a double major in of Liberal Arts & Sciences and Railroad Engineering. Proudly, I am expected to graduate in May of this year and transfer to Albertus Magnus in Fall of 2017 where I'll be working towards a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and then a Master's degree in the Arts and Leadership. What lead me to attend Gateway was the uncertainty of my future after being laid off from a job that I held for 5 years. I had no idea that I would be where I am today and I had no real plan of what I was going to do with my life. I decided to attend Gateway because it was less than a mile away from my house in the Hill section of New Haven and the cost of tuition isn't as much as attending a four year University.

Upon my admission I learned that I could be eligible for Financial Aid and I wouldn't have to pay as much out-of-pocket expenses. This was music to my ears because I was out of work with no income and I have three children to support. Yes, I have three children, two beautiful little girls ages 9 & 3 --- and my son age 10. My three year old attends Gateway's Early Learning Center. They are the light of my life and my number one job, I work for them as I am a single parent. My journey into higher education has not been easy but with the help of Financial Aid and all of the resources and support systems that my College has provided for students like me...I have been able to change my career path and achieve my educational dreams. I was able to obtain a work-study position in the Student Success Center and Counseling Office in my first semester. Once I started working in the Student Success Center more opportunities started to come. I became the President of the Black Student Association, Student Government Association Treasurer, and the Senator of all Student Organizations and Clubs, and served on several committees. I was selected to participate as a Mentee for the Gateway Executive Mentoring Program. After being recognized for being a good leader and team builder I was hired to Coach Gateway's Coed Soccer and Volleyball teams. In the beginning I knew nothing about either sport, but I am a team builder, and I develop people. Gateway gave me the opportunity and platform to learn, grow and develop my skills more than ever before in my life.

Many of my professors in my classes have become my mentors. I have regular contact with them. I see them on campus and they have had a profound impact on me and my family. What I have learned from them I use in my daily life. When I drive by buildings with my children we talk about the different types of architecture and the various types of designs and what countries they are modeled after....this is just one example my studies have had on my life.

I would also like to share with you all the fact that, once I told my Gateway faculty, Staff, Professors, Mentors and Advisors that I wanted to run for Mayor of New Haven or be a State Senator they all got behind me and have continuously supported me in my vision and goals. I have been introduced to the Board of Alders, City Officials including Mayor Toni Harp, and I feel fortunate to share how much I enjoy being a part of the Gateway community and I am grateful for the good quality education and experience that the College and President Kendrick has provided for me and my daughter Amber.

I am here to tell you that the system works and I really hope that the budget cuts don't affect our future students and take away the same resources and opportunities that I was given. Thank you.